The Road Had a Clean Bill of Health for the Man Who Could Fight Like That.

McKEON'S GRAFT

JOHN RUSSELL

freight and baggage car.

looking reproachfully at the clumsy "Es wort' extra-to carry of that kind between our 'ands,"
"Go on now, Esteban," growled
McKeon. "Be satisfied with your

graft, can't you? And get steam on that old teakettle." He tossed a lone, lean mail sack in before making all fast.

The few ragged loungers who squatted in the dust and rolled internable cigarettes out of newspaper looked on with languid interest. It was well known to them that the tossing of the mail sack was the sig-nal for departure. Senor McKeon alvays performed the ceremony with the mail sack when he was just about to abandon his duties as station agent, shipping clerk. and freight handler, and assume those of conductor, brakeman and expres other train for forty-eight hours.

MeKeon walked to the forward step and gave the signal. A doleful shrick from the whistle responded as the locomotive and two cars, with rattle and clank, staggered out across the plateau. Ticket pad and punch in hand, McKeon stood in the doorway looking over his collection of passen gers from under bushy brows with calculating eye.

The usual crowd, apparently. Small planters from Buenaventura, small tradesmen from the plateau villages chance workers in the mines, riff raff of the mountains and the cattle plains, a motley carful.

McKeon strolled down the aisle marking the faces. Instinctively he graded his fares, from the coffee-colored mixtures of negro and Indian to the lemon-hued mestizos. And as he marked he scowled.

Tints, as racial emblems, had no significance for McKeon. But in one weighty particular he was concerned with the complexion of the patrons of the road. It had direct bearing upon his profit from the trip. It business consideration. And And appar ently luck was not with him this day noted an undue preponderance of lighter skins. That meant, naturally bluffed with safety into paying twice the legal fare, more difficulty in fixing arbitrary freight rates, and less reward for a hard-working function ary like himself.

He was still gauging the possibili ties when he came to the rear of the car and a face showed out of the smoke veil that had no part in the prevail-

and the brand-new hat that set so mered in their ears.

"How're you, Con?" he inquired, outfit," with ready address. "If it's all the same to you, guess I'll ride outside. "Ever had any trouble?".

"What trouble would I have?" I'm not good on mixed flavors, and it's too various in there. Fine unch of assorted ruffians you carry." McKeon nodded, "Prospectin'?" he them.'

inquired. Silver," returned the other. "Just came down through the mountains. Got through without a knife in laughed. "You don't see many Amercans this way, do you?"

'Not a dozen a year.' "Like the job?" "Gotta like it," was his laconic this line?"

He slouched back into the car and began to collect. The stranger leaned in the doorway to watch him.

IT was worthwhile to watch McKeon in pursuit of his profession. Tall, raw-boned, hard-eyed and bearded, he towered like a giant among the natives. Money he took and money he returned-sometimes. Tickets he punched and distributed, to some But always without argument, imper turbable, deliberate

Shrill protests fell to silence before the slow glance. Expostulate hands big shoulders. There were few who them. He proceeded by a masterful system of his own, did McKeon, based on his knowledge of the people. And the men who might have made diffiley, had no cause to do so.

Only once was the transaction brisk interrupt the chatter and hum of talk through the car. At the end section nearest the door

sat four men in rough mountain garb, hardy citizens, who had cumbered the "This is freight, senores," an-

nounced McKeon, calmly. And he proceeded to fix a price on the knapsacks.

One of the group, a thick, heavy jawed individual, built like a weight lifter, objected vigorously, giving Mc-Keon eye for eye, as if testing him. "Are you, then, sole owner of this ing across the platform and crowding road?" he demanded. "Must all give through into the freight, car, They money as you ask? And what if we

casually in his hand. are at liberty to walk down with their burdens," he answered. "I am told

the walking is excellent and very good for the health."

The senores subsided and paid, murmuring one to the other.

When McKeon returned to the middle platform the prospector was waiting for him with a gold piece. McKeon was a resulted.

We have decided to discuss it further."

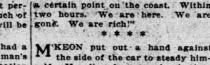
It was a throaty voice, purring and

Keon took the money and returned him the proper change on his fare. But he did not take the trouble to punch a ticket. The prospector noted that detail with a whimsical smile. "Pretty profitable business," he ob-

the coast. The locomotive went no concession.
plunging and holding like a stubborn "The senores

CKEON and the melancholy laneous freight, bags of mineral came to discuss," he said. Is it persengine-driver swung the specimens and stacks of hides, mitted to ask the senor how much of two hours. We are here. We are that tariff he forced us to pay will be gone. We are rich!"

** * ** the door of the combined clumsy wooden box at which Esteban





that twinkled engagingly.

McKeon regarded him with casual interest, noting the riding suit of ducks that managed to fit so jauntily thrown back against the authors.

Doubt taking process wall and significance, of suppressed excitement. McKeon's insult had not drawn a spark from them, fired with injustice as they had pretended to be.

"I would say—we desire me to do?" "You can make spark from them, fired with injustice as they had pretended to be.

"You got good nerve, handling that remarked the prospector,

"Paying any dividends?"

"Sure. It handles all the goods that go into the province. And it owns
the platinum mines." "How about its passenger busi-

McKeon consulted his ticket pad.

"Fifteen fare, this trip.".
"That's what you might call a fair division," remarked the prospector izzically. "You chuck the money up and all that hangs on the bell rope belongs to the company!"

McKeon only nodded. The pros-

pector gazed his admiration. There was no swagger, on the other hand, ceased to gesture at the shift of those no hesitation about the tall conductor's admission. "Don't they kick?"
"Who, the company? Why should

they? They make it pay 30 per cent. guy's gotta live. And that blame culty, recognized residents of the val-ley, had no cause to do so.

"What's the wage?" "Ten a week-Mex."
"Well-a good many could manage I to live on that down here," said the prospector, brightly.

McKeon turned a slow glance on "A good many ain't got a youngster at school back in the States they got to plan and save for," he returned. "Oh," said the prospector, and fell

silent, sobered. THE doorway was darkened. Three of the passengers were balancwere three of the group who had McKeon gathered the bell rope sacks. Apparently they were not pre made the outcry about the knappared to see the prospector. They them, he of the heavy jaw, thrust to

It was a throaty voice, purring and

McKeon looked the three over They stood close together, the speaker a little in advance squat, speaker a little in advance squat, product of the mines. . . I solid-built, swarthy customers all. We have waited. Did they "Bo-so," returned McKeon, undisturbed. "Tve seen it better."

The train had jolted over the break of the plateau, winding down through natural gorges of the descent toward the coast. The locometive were recommendative to the plateau of the plateau, winding down through natural gorges of the descent toward the coast. The locometive were recommendative to the plateau of the plateau, winding down through natural gorges of the descent toward the coast. The locometive were recommendative to the plateau of the mountain type of gold seeker once would ever learn of nocent box and what it they can be plateau of the mountain type of gold seeker once would ever learn of their hands—nocent box and what it they think wise ones were plateau. The plateau of the mountain type of gold seeker once would ever learn of nocent box and what it they think wise ones were plateau. The plateau of the pla

and holding like a stubborn "The senores know what they can le with its ears laid back do," he drawled, tamping the coal in

ing and ingenuous, sat opposite on a fruit cake.

The three lenglish, speaking thickly. "And y fourth man standing in the coach pairs of eyes had come to rest on Mcthought, because 1 was plugging doorway, weapon leveled, and the startled, bobbing faces of the passengers inside.

The three lenglish, speaking thickly. "And y fourth man standing in the coach light. By matching the agility, the startled, bobbing faces of the passengers inside.

The three length was plugging doorway, weapon leveled, and the startled, bobbing faces of the passengers inside. cars. A little man, and white—not only white, but pink, with a blue eye that twinkled engagingly.

McKenn regarded to the process of the proc

"Oh, I don't know. They look like collect you keep for yourself. We pretty tough customers—some of believe—possibly one-fifth. That is panther."

And he sprang like a hungry panther.

a guess, eh? So be it. But we are

stopped him.

"Your pardon. A moment only. We believe we are right concerning the fifty pesos. And if we are, then we also believe you will be interested in a small matter which will mean not a small matter which will mean not better but fifty thousand pesos.

"To your post! Unloose the engine. It is to be that way."

Over the heads of the group Mc-

car. Outside, the blatting of the expin clanked. The fourth man sprang haust buffeted noisily among the to the passenger coach, a revolver rocks. The three by the door stood gleaming in his fist. Presently there by our friend of the fifty pesos here, he took distance. tense, their gaze fixed upon McKeon. The big conductor stared back, sway- two who had shown knives tightened

ing a little.
"Fifty thousand!" echoed the senor. We swear it, Observe. We have watched. We have seen the senor. He collects the fares. Good. Forty, maybe fifty, he keeps for himself. Good. We admire, And we say—here is a man who can collect fifty pesos for himself—let us hope he will help us to collect a fortune If we are right, he shall have his

McKeon had drawn back a short step, still staring. The heel of his beot came in sharp contact with the clumsy box from which he had risen. The leader of the group nodded and grinned

"This senor here," he said, indicat ing the prospector, who sat listening, open-mouthed and wide-eyed, "there is no reason why he should remain Shall we invite him to the other car while we further discuss that fiftythat fifty thousand pesos, senor?' McKeon stood as one dazed, but he

shook his head. "So be it," continued the other. "He can at least do us no harm. Meanhesitated an instant. Then one of while-because we have not time to pesos? Tell us that, senor." "And if you are?" quered McKeon

"Ah—if we are, you will doubtless "Your offer-The leader pointed to the box a

McKeon's feet "You have the substance of it there," he smiled. "Five hundred pounds of platins....Six months" one would ever learn of their in-nocent box and what it held? Did they think wise ones would never reach these places? Truly—it is too simple. And platina sells itself now

breaths.

"You want me to join you! and its feet braced for bumps. Mckeon whirled the wheel on the primitive hand brakes to lighten its task
and passed into the rear car.

The stranger followed him uninvited. There, amid piles of miscel
an expressive hand. "Pardon. We A certain steamer will meet us at

"I would say-what exactly do you | "You can make it much easier for neer down the road some little dis-

Tifty thousand pesos, senor."

Keon was aware of the fourth bandit

There was a silence in the joiting at work between the cars. A coupling was a gap, rapidly widening as the while I keep him contented." the brake wheel on the baggage car

heavy-jawed man, purring on the the lessening pound of the locomo-words. "That shall be your share, tive. McKeon had a glimpse of the the revolver.

smiling. "He accompanies your engi- chained. McKeon's insult had not drawn a spark from them, fired with injustice as they had pretended to be.

McKeon laid his pipe beside him and rested his huge hands on his knees. The speaker met his gaze squarely.

"If it is further permitted," he went on rapidly, "we would ask to know how much of the various sum you collect you keep for yourself. We believe—possibly one-fifth. That is speaker and he sprang like a hungry mended. And as to you—"

McKeon's insult had not drawn a spark from them, fired with injustice as they had pretended to be.

"You can make it much easier for us, that is all. Join us, and all we intuse is all. Join us, and all we witness what direction we take. You understand? Meanwhile—we have out knapsacks outside, and they are doctrine had just been advanced and throw. The man had a body and limbs like iron. Once the twisting of the fifty pesos."

"He smiled."

"You can make it much easier for us, that is all. Join us, and all we witness what direction we take. You understand? Meanwhile—we have out knapsacks outside, and they are doctrine had just been advanced and throw. The man had a body and limbs like iron. Once the twisting of the fifty pesos."

The leader crughed his chest with one mighty arm, thrusting his thigh at every foothold for a straight throw. The man had a body and limbs like iron. Once the twisting out knapsacks outside, and they are doctrine had just been advanced and proclaimed (December 2), and the proclaimed (December 2), and the

He smiled.

wift with a pistol."

The leader was immensely gratiled. His smile widehad was increased to the control of th fied. His smile widened upon his half bitten through, he had it. teeth.

while I keep him contented. An upnung foot caught him on the Tito stepped obediently from the side of the jaw, and with rattling platform through the doorway. The teeth he yelped and folded backleader, unthinking in his vanity, al- ward. lowed him to step past the end of McKeon worked around until he

sengers inside.

"That is Jose," explained the leader, of the narrow space like a demon un-

HIS FEET AND STUMBLED BACKWARD JUST IN TIME TO ESCAPE THE RIPPING STAB OF

PAULO'S KNIFE, AS THE BAN-

"Paulo!" gurgled the leader.

them."

a guess, eh? So be it. But we are McKeon twitched his shoulders and puffed slowly.

McKeon twitched his shoulders and puffed slowly.

"Ain't civilized enough yet for that kind of trouble. They's only spiggicles."

The prospector shivered and smiled. They carry knives of the lights glinted. His long, spare body was stooped forward a little. By the way," he added, "who owns this line?"

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McKEON took in the situation destiletely. He nodded and had and darted forward. The prospector covering among the hitched wheeze of painful the noted and backed away from the end of the revolver, hands still up, leaving the native field the long barrel jammed against his middle. McKeon checked in full carrew, with the muzzle pressing into the native field the long barrel jammed against his made and darted forward. The spaniard held the long barrel jammed against h -silence save for the heave and for January is: body was stooped forward a little.

"If this is a jest, senor—" he began, with a rumble. But the spokesman stopped him.

"Your pardon, A moment only. We"

"Your pardon, A moment only. We"

"It is a pity you are her signt of the naked blades one of the items quoted in the India and dodging, never weakened. He had striven for the thumb lock since the destruction of the delapsed since the destruction of the had striven for the thumb lock since the stacks of hides.

"It appears, senor, that you were leapsed since the destruction of the had striven for the thumb lock since the stacks of hides.

"The leader wise."

The leader was love of the items quoted in the India and dodging, never weakened. He had striven for the thumb lock since the stacks of hides.

The leader was love of the items quoted in the India and dodging, never weakened. He had striven for the thumb lock since the stacks of hides with a squeal of terror and collapsed among the stacks of hides.

The leader was love of the items quoted in the India and dodging, never weakened. He had striven for the thumb lock since the destruction of the d

For the tenth time the three living

An upflung foot caught him on the

beside the box of platinum.

*You did it!" he mouthed. "You Then burst cat! did it all yourself!"

The prospector began to laugh,

Once more McKeen leaged. And this time he huddled the unfortunate Tito before him like a bag of salt.

The revolver barked twice. Tito screamed, and was trampled under foot as McKeen snaked a hand through the struggle and gripped the armed wrist. Interlocked, McKeen and the leader caromed across the end of the car through drifting smoke and a bitter scent of scorched ciothing, each straining for the instant advantage.

The revolver came away from the faccid grip as he wrenched at it. He struck with the butt—once and zeros the from the faccid grip as he wrenched at it. He struck with the butt—once and again.

** * *

THE prospector crawled out of the him, the shambles. Gone were his healthy armed a wild glance up at the ghastly red ruin of a man who clothing, each straining for the instant advantage.

The revolver barked twice. Tito still it. American firm Just bought out your Bogota crowdle the butt—once and again.

** * *

The revolver barked twice. Tito still it. American firm Just bought out your Bogota crowdle tout from the faccid grip as he wrenched at it. He struck with the butt—once and again.

** * *

The revolver barked twice. Tito still it. American firm Just bought out your Bogota crowdle tit. He struck with the butt—once and again.

** * *

The revolver barked twice. Tito still it. He struck with the butt—once and again.

** * *

The revolver barked twice. Tito still it. American firm Just bought out your Bogota crowdle tit. He struck with the butt—once and again.

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The revolver barked twice. Tito still it. American firm Just bought out your Bogota crowdleth the butt—once and the s

McKeon was in rags, scored and "How could you do it? How?—could crimson-slashed. But his eyes you find the nerve and the strength, glinted under the brows with hard and will? And why?—Fifty thousand lights.

close to hysteria.

"Man," he cried, "I've got to tell! rob the company!"
I'm no prospector. I'm the rail(Copyrigh

"But still I don't see." he whimpered "How could you do it? How?-could

"The spigotty devils!" answered McKeon, heavily. "They wanted to

NEW YEAR IN D. C.

N interesting reach of time and a thrilling mass of changes numerous advertisements of sales of intervene between the Januaries of 1824 and 1924. The century that lies between was the most revolutionary in all the history of the world and the most marvelous in all the great volumes of human in all the great volumes of human. in all the great volumes of human experience.

It will prove worth while just to Meats, fowls, vegetables and fruits. mention a few of the things, events while not supplied in such variety and people that served to mark the as now, were ridiculously cheap. day a hundred years ago. It came on We are told that board and lodging

One of the almanacs of that time American style, "including liquors. refers to the closing year with the was only \$1.50 to \$2.50 a day. uotation, "All's well that ends well."

iel D. Tomkins, Vice President: John Quincy Adams, Secretary of State; William H. Crawford, Secretary of the Treasury; John C. Calhoun, Secretary of War; Samuel L. Southard, ecretary of the Navy; William Wirt, Attorney General; John Marshall Chief Justice; Bushrod Washington, assistant chief justice.

The Eighteenth United States Con ress had adjourned from December 31, 1823, to January 3, 1824, and before adjournment had confirmed the

Samuel Stevens was Governor of ending always with one or more balls after numerous dinners. Virginia, and Andrew Jackson, sen-

the country.

had a knee on the broad chest of the and pass out by the other.

his children."

ceived for her, "very gracefully," the distinguished guests, diplomats, officers of the government, army and navy, and citizens generally. Among distinguished guests, notice is made of Gen. Andrew Jackson, and the tor expressed disappointment at his wearing spectacles.

In this connection may be men tioned a letter from a correspondent signing himself "Gustavus," in which he says that he wishes to see in ends of the blades actually exuded the Washington government tional administration, in 1825, Wil- action. liam H. Crawford as President; John John Quincy Adams, Vice President; 1,700 revolutions a minute. An en-Henry Clay, Secretary of State, and Gen. Andrew Jackson, Secretary of war. That seems to have been the of the blade ends would be in the extent of his political vision and neighborhood of six hundred miles an prognostication. "Old Hickory" was hour. already held high in the esteem of

already held high in the esteem of the masses.

Of the six newspapers published then in Washington the Daily National Intelligencer was the only one tional Intelligencer was the only one ter and fly apart. Even the smalless issued on New Year day. The editor offered the "compliments which be-long to the occasion of the recur-rence of the first day of the New

and one at the Washington Assembly in conditions of modern warfare.

Hall, "to be illuminated with 300 where the aviator must "loop the lights; music by the entire Marine loop," or plunge, or ascend sharply Band. Tickets at all book stores. In maneuver, the machine must meet Mr. Kinchly will keep the bar well and withstand these severe tests. provided with refreshments." At the same place a ball was announced, "in honor of Gen. Jackson's victory at of the aviator depends upon

CENTURY AGO.

BY 0. Q. WRIGHT, U. S. N., RE-TIRED. mentioned—presumably, on the anniversary of that battle.

In every paper were to be found

chaplains of the House or Senate or others to be bank directors (of the distinguished visitors. United States banks).

Cold blows the wind—the driving hall Rebellows in the woodland vale: The weary traveler feels the blast And girds his closk around him fast.

Of course, the great event of the tion from exchanges, and numerous New Year in Washigton was the letters on all imaginable subjects, and President's reception. Ten years had one of the items quoted in the In-And now, with thumb newspapers of that time described in Philadelphia." brief editorials, the crowded rooms, Niles' Weekly Register and other and scramble for food and drink, of papers were distressed over the pub-"Ah—you must not think that in your country alone is practiced the art. We also have the trick of it.

Tito." he added aside. "tie me up that little fowl who flutters there among the hides—we will be gentle with him. And, Paula—do the same he took distance.

For the tenth time the three living went and arilk, or both which it appears an abundance had been provided. "All the beauty and fashion, worth and distinction. The leader's face was purple. His lips writhed, but no sound came. McKeon was pressing home Paulo half lifted and wiped the wire assembled to offer the compliments of the season to our much-vengence with the book distance. both which it appears an abundance lication of confidential correspond-"All the beauty ed like a patriarch in the midst of

> Music was by the Marine Band, and friendship, at a time too late in life to "no decent person was refused admission." One editor complained of the delay and confusion in handling the nearly two hundred carriages that entered the yard between one and four o'clock, and urged that on the next occasion of the kind both gates great rapidity." of the yard be opened, so that the throng of vehicles might enter by one for popular commodores, made their

Mrs. Monroe was indisposed, and mostly a her daughter. Mrs. George Hay, re-

New Orleans," but the date was not not being a single flaw.

He caught at his lip to still i

slaves and rewards for runaways; and Such prices as are mentioned of that time are astonishingly low.

at the leading hotels of the city

New Year then was celebrated gen as if well satisfied with current erally here, and attended with liberal events. It was said afterward that libation, the younger men in society 1824 ushered in the "era of good feelgoing, during the afternoon, to the
residences of all friends and prominent people to call. People who did not care to serve the usual refreshments or, for any other reas not receiving, hung a basket on the of callers. I find no notices of church services

and even though the day had not fallen in the middle of the week, there were so few places of worship that been conducted in the Hall of Representatives (now Statuary Hall) at the Capitol, where there was preaching regularly on Sundays-by the

It was, as now, a social holida

Mrs. Decatur, who had remained in

the country.

John Sharp was publishing the of the steamboat Potomac with a num-Washington almanac and his verse ber of passengers, including Commo dore Hull and Capt. Elliott, United

States Navy. In the dearth of news in those days papers were given to extensive quota-

late President Adams, in which Mr. Adams appears to have made some slurring reference to Mr. Jackson, and when this was brought to the attention of the latter, he sent a letter to the press, in which he said: "This is a nefarious attempt to poison an old be repaired by new affections.'

The one letter carrier for the whole city tramped the entire distance from Georgetown to the navy yard on foo -a distance of four miles-"with

The two busses, afterward named trips along the main avenue (then mostly a quagmire) as regularly as

Testing Airplanes. THE propellers of airplanes must possess extraordinary strength. for their speed tends to disrupt them. In a test run, with the pro pellers made of wood, which had been dried to the lowest possible moisture content, or "bone dry," the or na- sap, forced out by the centrifugal

Some air machine engines run at

lack of balance between the two blades is a very serious matter, since rence of the first day of the New Year to our numerous readers"; and the announced that the mansion of the President would be open to the reception of the visits of his friends.

Then follows the announcement of New Year balls—one to be given "at the lodgeroom, Virginia avenue, 6 p.m., tickets to be had at Mr. Bully's and of Dr. Clark, in the navy yard, and one at the Washington Assembly in conditions of modern warfare. the pull of one must counterbalance The s

